

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-05 EUR-12 CU-04 SY-05

A-01 OPR-02 PC-01 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /105 W

-----010551 171238Z /46

R 171030Z SEP 77

FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8854

INFO AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PINS, SF

SUBJECT: DEATH OF STEVE BIKO: REACTION AND COMMEMORATIVE
ACTIVITIES

REF: DURBAN 619

1. AS OF SEPTEMBER 16, SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK COMMUNITY AND
RELATIVELY SMALL NUMBER OF CONCERNED WHITES REMAIN IN SHOCK
AND DISBELIEF AT NEWS OF STEVE BIKO'S DEATH. GENERAL MOOD
IS ONE OF ANGER, FRUSTRATION, AND IMPOTENCE. NUMEROUS COMME-
MORATIVE ACTIVITIES HAVE TAKEN PLACE THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY,
ALL PEACEFUL YET NOT WITHOUT INCIDENT. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES
BY PROVINCE AS REPORTED IN PRESS AND NOTED BY MISSION FOLLOWS:

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2. TRANSVAAL: BPC PRESIDENT KEN RACHIDI HELD PRESS CONFERENCE
ON SEPTEMBER 15 AT WHICH HE SAID THAT "MR. KRUGER IS FREIGHTENED
BY THE FACT THAT THE MESSAGE OF BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS COULD
CONVERT EVEN THE HARD CORE NATIONALIST BY ITS MESSAGE OF
EQUALITY AND ITS STRESS ON THE VALUE OF HUMAN DIGNITY RE-
GARDLESS OF COLOR, RACE OR CREED". ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS,

VIGILS, REQUIEM MASSES, AND COMMEMORATIVE SERVICES WERE HELD IN SOWETO, UNIVERSITY OF THE NORTH AT TURFLOOP, AND PRETORIA TOWNSHIPS. STATEMENTS DENOUNCING DEATHS IN DETENTION AND REQUESTING A FULL JUDICIAL INVESTIGATION WERE HEARD FROM THE SOUTH AFRICAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, THE AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES ASSOCIATION, BLACK SASH, UNION OF BLACK JOURNALISTS, CRISTIAN INSTITUTE, PROGRESSIVE FEDERAL PARTY, THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PRESS AND THE AFRIKAANS PAPER DIE TRANSVALER. ON SEPTEMBER 15 TWO WHITE WOMEN FROM BLACK SASH LAID A WREATH CARRYING THE NAME OF STEVE BIKO IN FRONT OF THE PODIUM AT THE NATIONAL PARTY CONGRESS IN PRETORIA. NP DELEGATES MANHANDLED THE TWO WOMEN AND DESTROYED THE WREATH. FURTHER COMMEMORATIVE ACTIVITIES ARE SCHEDULED FOR DOWNTOWN JOHANNESBURG BY THE PROGRESSIVE FEDERAL PARTY AND AT UNIVERSITY OF WITWATERSRAND CAMPUS.

3. CAPE: SEPTEMBER 15 POLICE ROUNDUP OF 1510 STUDENTS HOLDING MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR BIKO AT UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE (TOTAL STUDENT BODY IS 1600) WAS MOST PROMINENT INCIDENT TO DATE. FACED WITH RIOT POLICE WITH DIGS AND BATONS, THE STUDENTS ACCORDING TO PRESS, "WENT WILLINGLY" WITH "TOTAL LACK OF VIOLENCE". FIVE HUNDRED WOMEN STUDENTS HAVE BEEN RELEASED ON THEIR OWN RECOGNIZANCE; NO APPLICATIONS FOR BAIL HAVE BEEN SUBMITTED FOR THE MALE STUDENTS WHO ARE SCHEDULED TO APPEAR BEFORE COURT ON SEPTEMBER 26 FOR CONTRAVENING THE RIOTIOUS ASSEMBLIES ACT. ELSEWHERE IN THE CAPE, 800 WHITES ATTENDED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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A MEMORIAL SERVICE IN GRAHAMSTOWN CATHEDRAL, A 12-HOUR VIGIL WAS HELD BY RHODES UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND A MRMORIAL SERVICE AT CAPE TOWN UNIVERSITY WAS ADDRESSED BY EAST LONDON DAILY DISPATCH EDITOR DONALD WOODS. ACCORDING TO THE PRESS, SLOGANS COMMEMORATING BIKO HAVE APPEARED ON BUILDINGS IN CAPE TOWN AND DEMANDS FOR A FULL JUDICIAL INQUIRY HAVE BEEN MADE BY THE COLORED REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL AND THE CAPE-BASED AFRIKAANS DAILY DIE BURGER.

4. NATAL: CONGEN DURBAN REPORTS MEMORIAL MEETINGS IN PIETERMARITZBURG AREA. AT MARITZBURG CAMPUS OF NATAL UNIVERSITY ON SEPTEMBER 15, MULTI-RACIAL AUDIENCE OF SOME 250 WERE ADDRESSED BY (FY-77 IV GRANTEE) SIMON QUBULE, PRESIDENT OF FEDERAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AND OTHERS. JUST AFTER THE MEETING STARTED, SECURITY BRANCH OFFICERS SERVED ON ORDER BANNING DEMONSTRATIONS ON THE CAMPUS FOR A 37-HOUR PERIOD. COMMEMORATIVE RALLIES WERE ALSO HELD AT THE WHITE DURBAN BRANCH OF UNIVERSITY OF NATAL, THE (INDIAN) UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN-WESTVILLE, AND THE UNIVERSITY OF NATAL MEDICAL SCHOOL. AS REPORTED IN REFTTEL, GATHSA BUTHELEZI ISSUED A STATEMENT ON BIKO'S DEATH THAT APPEARED TO BE THE STRONGEST ATTACK HE HAS EVER MADE ON THE SAG.

5. COMMENT: SO FAR THE REACTIONS TO BIKO'S DEATH HAVE BEEN PEACEFUL. STUDENTS AND OTHER POLITICALLY ACTIVE BLACKS ARE, HOWEVER, OUTRAGED OVER THE AFFAIR. THERE IS A FEELING OF FRUSTRATION AND IMPOTENCE, AND SOME SPONTANEOUS VIOLENCE IS POSSIBLE. LIMITED FEEDBACK INDICATES THAT BPC MEMBERS, BIKO'S FAMILY, AND OTHERS ARE PLEASED WITH US OFFICIAL REACTION TO DATE. THE STATEMENT BY SECRETARY VANCE WAS PROMINENTLY REPORTED IN BOTH THE BLACK AND WHITE PRESS. ONE TELLING ASPECT OF THE INCIDENT IS THE APPARENT BEWILDERMENT OF MANY WHITES IN LEADING POSITIONS WHO HAVE ASKED "WHO IS STEVE BIKO?"
BOWDLER

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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
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